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ABSTRACT

The Ontario Ministry of Education's role in funding educational research, and its procedures for the dissemination of educational research information are described. Two ministry initiatives are discussed in detail: the establishment of the Educational Information System for Ontario (EISO), a computerized search and retrieval service to access educational data bases, principally ERIC; and the creation of the Ontario Research Information System (ONTERIS), a computerized data base of Ontario research produced by the Ministry, school boards, and other educational organizations. Further dissemination plans and the future of EISO and ONTERIS are discussed, and the Ministry's dissemination program is related to the nine statements of agreement by dissemination professionals as published in the November 1977 Educational Researcher. (Author/MBR)

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EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION IN ONTARIO

A GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Barbara Beardsley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

by

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Ministry of Education, Ontario

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ONTERIS ABSTRACT

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Hildebrand, Bart. -- Educational Information in Ontario : A Government Perspective. -- Toronto : Ontario Ministry of Education, 1976. -- 16 p.

Annotation:

The report describes the Ontario Ministry of Education's role in funding educational research through grant-in-aid and contractual programs. The Ministry's procedures for the dissemination of research information are also presented. Disucssed in detail are two Ministry initiatives: the establishment of the Educational Information System for Ontario (EISO), a computerized search and retrieval service to access educational databases, principally ERIC: and the creation of the Ontario Educational Research Information System (ONTERIS), a computerized database of Ontario research produced by the Ministry, school boards and other educational organizations. Further dissemination plans and the future of EISO and ONTERIS are discussed. The Ministry's dissemination program is related to the 9 statements of agreement by dissemination professionals as published in the Educational Researcher, November 1977.

ABSTRACT SUBMITTED TO ERIC

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The report describes the Ontario Ministry of Education's role in funding educational research through grant-in-aid and contractual programs. The Ministry's procedures for the dissemination of research information are also presented. Discussed in detail are two Ministry initiatives: the establishment of the Educational Information System for Ontario (EISO), a computerized search and retrieval service to access educational databases, principally ERIC; and the creation of the Ontario Educational Research Information System (ONTERIS), a computerized database of Ontario research produced by the Ministry, school boards and other educational organizations. Further dissemination plans and the future of EISO and ONTERIS are discussed. The Ministry's dissemination program is related to the 9 statements of agreement by dissemination professionals as published in the Educational Researcher, November 1977.

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION IN ONTARIO

A GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

Commencing in 1971 the Ministry of Education decided to have a direct involvement in the sponsoring and initiating of educational research. Previously, the major portion of educational research in the province had been undertaken by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. The Ministry instituted two research programs: Grants in Aid of Educational Research and Contractual Research.

The Grants in Aid program solicited on a yearly basis proposals from researchers within the educational community on topics which they felt were pertinent to education. An independent review committee met and rendered decisions on all of the proposals submitted. Since 1971, 222 proposals have been funded through this program amounting to a dollar value of $4,186,000.

The Contractual Research program is designed to meet the needs of the Ministry of Education. Usually, proposals are generated from within the Ministry and as a result may be commenced at any time during the year. The Ministry assigns a supervisory official to the contract to provide advice and supervision to the contractor who is undertaking the research for the Ministry. Since 1971, 241 projects with a dollar value of $9,675,000 have been funded through this program. Thus, in

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a seven-year period the Ministry has funded 463 projects with an associated cost of $13,861,000.

Obviously, with a research program of such scope, the dissemination of the results of such research was crucial. Concomitantly with the introduction of the research program in 1971, the issue of how to disseminate the results was investigated. A decision was made to establish a dissemination unit within the research section to publish two types of documents.

1. The research report itself.
2. A one-page summary document, entitled: Educational Highlights

It must be noted that since the copyright for Grants in Aid proposal rests with the researcher, it has not been the normal course of action for the Ministry to publish under its auspices research funded under this program. What has been done is to receive sufficient copies from the researcher to ensure that a copy of the report is available through the O.I.S.E. Library, Ministry of Education Library, and the Regional Offices of the Ministry. Under the terms of Contractual Research, copyright rests with the Ministry. A large proportion of this research has been published.

Direct dissemination of these research reports is limited, thus it was felt that a wider circulation of the

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highlights of the research should be made. This led to the introduction of "Educational Highlights" in both official languages. This is a one-page document which outlines the purpose for the research, some of the methods utilized, findings of the research, and information about where a person may find additional information on the topic. These highlights are sent to school board administrators, to university faculties and to interested educational groups, i.e., parent-teacher associations. Any one mailing would involve 9,500 recipients.

In 1976 the Ministry felt that there was still an unmet need in that the role of the Ministry in promoting and funding educational research was not well understood. To redress this problem it was decided to publish an "Educational Research Manual". The Manual is distributed to board of education officials whose duties bring them into contact with the research program of the Ministry. It is designed to provide information on both the administration of the research program and the projects that have been undertaken. The Manual has three sections. The first deals with the administration of research, the second contains information on projects in progress, and the third with completed projects. It is the intention of the Ministry to update this Manual on a regular basis.

So far, what I have described is basically a controlled and limited dissemination of the Ministry's educational research. It is controlled and limited in the sense that the

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Ministry does the mailing to people who, it believes, are interested. By and large, information on research does not reach directly teachers or researchers. Thus it has been very difficult for these people to find information on Ontario-based research. This difficulty led to another decision back in the early seventies which was to devise some means by which anyone in the province could access Ministry and school board research on a single topic basis or on the basis of surveying what has been done in various areas.

Two thrusts were started:

1. The development of a search and computerized retrieval system of educational data bases, principally, ERIC. The object here was to provide to educators a central source which they could approach with their problems. By the use of a search analyst, the educator's problem would be delineated and then a computerized search made of the data bases to determine what information was available to meet his needs. This project, funded by the Ministry, is called the Educational Information Service for Ontario (EISO). Later in this presentation, Dr. Ethel Auster will share with you the mechanics of that program.
2. The second thrust was the creation of a computerized data base of Ontario research. This project, also funded by the Ministry, is known as the Ontario Educational Research Information Service (ONTERIS). Mrs. Barbara Beardsley will discuss this system. It must be noted that, at the same

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time, the Ministry was concerned about aggregating in a central pool its funded research, similar concerns were being expressed by the school boards of Metropolitan Toronto which had a research capability. Thus the Ministry and the Metropolitan School Boards agreed to pool their efforts and the result has been that, as of this date, approximately 1,000 research projects funded by the Ministry, school boards of Ontario, and O.I.S.E. have been included in a computerized data base which is now accessible by any educator in the Province of Ontario through the EISO service.

What I have described is the state of the Ministry's dissemination efforts at present. What are the future directions of the Ministry?

1. The Ministry will continue to publish research reports and Educational Highlights.
2. Although the research component of EISO is now finished, the Ministry will continue to support the service component which includes a search analyst, and the overhead associated.
3. The ONTERIS data base will be maintained and integrated into the Research and Evaluation Branch's dissemination section so that future research, as it is completed, will be included. In addition, a new section entitled Research in Progress will be added. At the present time, the

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ONTERIS data base is limited in the accessibility which the general user can make of it because of the lack of a printed or online thesaurus. The development of a Canadian education thesaurus will be undertaken shortly. The other major aspect will be the creation of the bilingual version of the system.

In 1977 a fundamental decision was made with respect to the ONTERIS data base. The decision was taken to extend the data base beyond the research aspect. It is the intention of the Ministry, over the next couple of years, to include within the ONTERIS data base all curriculum documents which have been produced by both the Ministry and school boards. To understand this implication, a slight digression is necessary. In Ontario the Ministry has control over what is taught in the schools. The Ministry of Education publishes curriculum guidelines spanning the Kindergarten to Grade 13 program. Subjects or courses which are taught in Ontario schools must be developed from one of the guidelines. A guideline provides the framework within which a school board may operate its programs, but does not lay out specific details of what and when a certain unit should be taught. This is left to each school board. Thus, school boards develop courses of study from the guidelines. The Ministry expects that many of these courses will incorporate local needs as seen by the school boards. It is the concern of the Ministry that, if a school board is starting the process of developing some courses of study for a particular guideline, it will not start "de novo". If this is

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the Ministry's expectation, then some mechanism must exist to allow the school boards to know what other school boards have done. ONTERIS will provide this information.

Next month, ONTERIS will begin to build a new data base, starting with the Ministry of Education's own curriculum guidelines. Simultaneously with this development the Ministry will collect from school boards all of the courses of study which they have developed from Ministry guidelines. These guidelines will be abstracted, keyed to the pertinent Ministry of Education guideline and included within the data base. Not only that, but it is expected within a couple of years, that a school board which wishes to develop a course of study from a particular guideline could interrogate ONTERIS and find out which school boards have developed courses of study from certain guidelines and then obtain copies either from the school board itself or from a central repository.

I would like to summarize my presentation to this point. The Ministry perceives that its role is to centralize all of the educational information developed from research and curriculum development so that any educator may access that information efficiently and effectively. Primary source of access to that data will be through the EISO service. To assure a broad access to that system, communication links will be established between the Ministry, research institutions, and school boards to supply ONTERIS with their materials as they are developed. Although this may appear to imply a one-way flow

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of communication, it is the Ministry's expectation that the process of submitting materials to ONTERIS will keep the visibility of ONTERIS high and thus encourages its use.

One issue I did not address was the standard that will be accepted by the ONTERIS data base. The decision has been made that all materials generated through research or curriculum development have worth. Thus, all materials will be included in this system. While it is appreciated that this is an easy way out, it is felt that it is for the user to judge the value of the information and not a screening board.

I should like to spend the next few minutes relating the Ministry's dissemination program to the nine statements of agreement by professionals in the field of educational dissemination as published in the November issue of the Educational Researcher.

Agreement 1 states that the purposes and outcomes of dissemination activities are many -- ranging from acquired knowledge for its own sake to specific improvements in educational practice. I believe from the above discussion that there is agreement between this agreement and Ministry practice.

Agreement 2 discusses a definition for the word dissemination. It notes four potential usages: spread, exchange, choice, and implementation. Spread and exchange refer to the one-way and two-way flow of information. Through ONTERIS and EISO it is hoped that this process will be undertaken. Choice refers to

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the facilitation of rational consideration of ideas, etc. This was one of the major purposes of instituting ONTERIS. Implementation again will be facilitated by the use of EISO and ONTERIS.

Agreements 3 and 4 refer to a nation-wide dissemination configuration. While the context here is the United States, the Ministry of Education feels that it is applicable in Canada. The system which this Province has developed is the most sophisticated in this country. The Ministry has made a proposal to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada that its dissemination system could serve as the model for the rest of the country. Ontario is prepared to assume a leadership role without expecting to have any proprietary rights on the final system.

Agreement 5 relates to the means and styles of linkages. Since ONTERIS was developed by the Ministry, one of the prime concerns in developing ONTERIS was that it should be accessible in terms of language format and styles by differing publics. Through the combination of ONTERIS and EISO it is expected that groups wishing to utilize these systems will find them sufficiently flexible to meet their needs.

Agreement 6 relates to the object of improving the system. The Ministry feels that this is fundamental to establishing a healthy dissemination system. A broad-range spectrum of personnel must be involved in the system. This means both awareness of the system and the ability to augment the system

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where necessary. It is a "sine qua non" that a system which does not move forward with the times will atrophy.

Agreements 7, 8 and 9 relate to the maintenance of a nation-wide dissemination configuration. It is the Ministry's expectation that if such a system develops in this country, then the ideas and concerns expressed in those agreements will be promoted by this Ministry for incorporation in such a Canadian nation-wide dissemination system.